

Curricular Innovation

'Developing Personalized Diversity Statements to Increase Diversity Knowledge and Competency'

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Problem: An understanding of identities (the traits of an individual, such as ethnicity, gender, et cetera) is important for successfully interacting/collaborating with colleagues, students, and trainees in medical education settings. The importance of understanding and experience with diversity is demonstrated by the requirement for personal diversity statements when applying for funding or employment. A lack of understanding 'diversity', and what constitutes a 'diversity statement', can lead to missed opportunities and poor professional experiences.

Program Objective: Foster an understanding of diversity; generate a competitive diversity statement.

Description of Program: A training program to foster understanding of diversity, and generate a personalized diversity statement, was conducted in two 2-hour sessions spaced one week apart. The first 'information' session is initiated with introductions and ice breakers, allowing attendees to gain comfort. Generating an atmosphere where a lack of knowledge is not stigmatized, and ground rules are established¹, allows for productive discussion.

The topic of 'identities' is discussed, followed by intersectionality. Equipped with this knowledge, attendees are asked to describe diversity. Information on diversity follows, with important emphasis on the inclusivity of diversity. The next step is honest, personal assessment of history with diversity and diverse populations. The session culminates with a discussion of how to engage in diversity practices. Finally, the purpose and format of a personal diversity statement is described.

Attendees return for the second 'assessment' session having prepared a diversity statement.

Statements are randomly distributed within groups, with each attendee receiving other attendees' diversity statements. Feedback is given on each, followed by a discussion on commonalities, highlights, and common issues. Individualized instructor feedback is valuable.

Evaluation/Assessment: The level of success for this training program was evaluated by the quality of diversity statements generated by the attendees, as assessed by program coordinators, and a feedback form that allows the attendees to evaluate whether they gained an improved understanding of diversity; felt competent in engaging in diversity discourse; and could identify the value of the program to their professional or personal social competency.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned: Evaluation suggested attendees made great gains in both understanding and comfort engaging with diversity. The program benefits from attendees with diverse identities for the purposes of demonstration and discussion. This training program equipped participants with a well-prepared Diversity Statement, a vital component of a competitive job application in medical and academic fields. More rigorous evaluation would allow for further improvements in the program.

Works Cited:

1 Kite, Mary K.; Case, Kim A.; Williams, Wendy R. *Navigating Difficult Moments in Teaching Diversity and Social Justice*. American Psychological Association; 1st edition, November 10, 2020.